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News Summary

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Lynne V. Cheney, the new head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, will be watched closely by academics. Story on Page 3.

President Reagan has approved a federal blueprint for regulating biotechnology. Story on Page 5.

No money for colleges and students is included in an education appropriations bill, but the subcommittee that approved it says that's just a technicality. Story on Page 9.

An opinion issued by the Justice Department limits the ability of people with AIDS to seek protection from discrimination by federally supported institutions. Story on Page 9.

Congress has voted to give more than $55.6-million to nine universities for research projects that had not been subject to review. Story on Page 11.

Stanford University has asked T.I.A.A.-C.R.E.F. to permit Stanford employees who participate in those pension programs to transfer funds to other plans. Story on Page 16.

The death of Len Bias, a star basketball player at the University of Maryland, has raised questions about possible drug use by members of the team. Story on Page 17.

Eight research universities in the East and Midwest have announced the formation of a new athletic conference. Story on Page 17.

Tensions between Chinese students and Africans studying in China have escalated into a full-blown diplomatic incident. Story on Page 19.

Law professors at Tel Aviv University are drafting a constitution for their country. Story on Page 19.

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POPULARITY MAY BE GROWING

Selective Colleges' Use of SAT Is Unshaken by Controversies

By ROBERT L. JACOBSON
WAKEFIELD, MASS.

In the face of persistent claims that it is unfair and unnecessary, the widely used Scholastic Aptitude Test seems to be as entrenched as ever in the admissions processes of selective colleges and universities.

The test may even be entering a period of growing popularity, says George H. Hanford, president of the College Board, as politically inspired calls for reform in higher education spur many public universities to become more selective.

But while hundreds of institutions continue to use S.A.T. scores of verbal and mathematical abilities—along with high-school transcripts and other criteria—in deciding who should be admitted to their freshman classes, a recent College Board colloquium here also showed that many admissions officers are eager to explore new methods of evaluation and assessment.

One reason is the continuing charge, often disputed, that the S.A.T. is biased against students from minority groups. Reports of declining admissions of blacks and other minorities at major institutions, as well as intense concerns about the academic performance of such students, are adding some striking new dimensions to the debate.

Still, the discussions here made clear, most admissions officers have no intention of scrapping the multiple-choice Scholastic Aptitude Test, now 60 years old. They are convinced that it offers at

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States Are Urged to Consider Sale of Hospitals and to Push for Changes in Medical Curricula

By SCOTT JASCHIK
BOCA RATON, FLA.

States should consider the sale of teaching hospitals, oppose efforts to require higher degrees for entry into some health professions, and push medical schools to revise their curricula, said a report released here last week.

The report, prepared by a commission of the Southern Regional Education Board, said such steps are needed to cope with the rising cost of medical education and changing health-care needs. The commission said governors and state legislators should:

► Consider selling public teaching hospitals to private groups or signing contracts with other organizations to manage the hospitals.

► Raise more revenue for teaching hospitals, either through taxes on hospital admissions or by allocating a greater share of general state funds.

► Require that private hospitals, including those not affiliated with medical schools, increase their services to poor patients to relieve some of the burden on teaching hospitals.

► Oppose moves by organizations of medical professionals to raise the minimum-degree requirements for entry into their professions.

► Encourage medical schools to change their courses to shift emphasis from curing illness to preventing illness.

► Find ways to improve the quality of

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College Tax Breaks Retained as Senate Passes Reform Bill

Lobbyists foresee tough fight in conference with House

By STACY E. PALMER
WASHINGTON

The tax-reform measure passed overwhelmingly by the Senate last week would continue many of the breaks that benefit colleges and universities, even as it seeks to overhaul the federal tax system.

With passage of the Senate bill, it has become virtually certain that some revision of the tax code will be enacted. College officials are braced for many more tough battles in the weeks ahead, however, as a House-Senate conference committee begins work this month on a compromise.

The House and Senate tax-reform bills differ dramatically in their treatment of issues affecting colleges.

The Senate bill would allow colleges to continue to use an unlimited amount of tax-free bonds to finance building projects and would retain the tax-free status of most tuition benefits and scholarships. It would also allow college workers to continue to make generous contributions annually to a special type of tax-deferred annuity plan for employees of non-profit organizations.

House Bill Called Devastating

In comparison, the bill passed by the House last year contains several provisions that college leaders have said would devastate higher education.

It would severely restrict the use of tax-free bonds by private colleges and levy taxes on the portion of scholarship aid not used to cover tuition. It would also limit how much retirement savings college workers could set aside to postpone tax payments and would require colleges to offer comparable retirement benefits to all

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Campus-Written Software May Herald New Chapter in Computer Revolution

By JUDITH AXLER TURNER

Faculty members are now writing computer programs that experts say could change the ways professors teach and students learn—thereby fulfilling one of the technological revolution's most beguiling promises.

But such software is difficult to find, difficult to acquire, and difficult to incorporate into the curriculum—due either to a lack of appropriate or sufficient hardware or to insufficient information about how to use it.

All that may be about to change:

► Computer companies that once put money and energy into encouraging the development of software are now looking as well at ways to encourage its dissemination.

► College administrators, who have come to realize that it is not possible for all software for their classrooms to be written on their own campuses, are setting up programs that encourage faculty members to find and acquire good software elsewhere.

► Professors who write software for their own courses are becoming less wary about sharing the programs with others, both because users are more sophisticated and more able to correct minor errors themselves and because the quality of the software has improved.

Given those new attitudes, the development of good, useful programs could bring with it a campus computer explosion to rival that of the arrival of inexpensive microcomputers.

▪

When the microcomputer revolution hit the campuses in 1982, excitement was high about how the machines would revolutionize education. "It was all hype preceding the real substance," says James F. Hoburg, a professor of electrical and computer engineering at Carnegie Mellon University. "Only now are people beginning to get a sense of how computers can be used to help education."

At first, instructional programs were turned out by the dozen by computer manufacturers desperate to find higher-education markets other than word processing, and by professors enthralled with their new toy. Many of them presented screen after screen of text and diagrams—much of it flashing, moving, and even in color. Many people dismissed the software—and the computers—as "electronic page turning."

Software developers made other errors in their efforts to find an educational niche

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As SAT Endures, New Testing Methods Are Sought

Continued from Page 1

least a slightly better clue than high-school grades alone as to how well prospective students are likely to perform academically in their first year of college.

In addition, admissions officers are frustrated by doubts about the reliability of high-school grading practices and by the long-standing problem of trying to compare the grades and class ranks of applicants from different high schools.

Nevertheless, the officials are becoming increasingly receptive to calls for more and better devices for selecting and advising students. And admissions directors are openly troubled by reports that, contrary to the advice of the College Board, which sponsors the S.A.T., some institutions use strict cutoff scores to screen applicants—and that, even when they don't, many students still think they do.

"S.A.T.'s have taken on a life of their own," said Natalie Aharonian, admissions director at Wellesley College. She urged colleges to "restore perspective" to admissions by making certain that their decisions on applicants were not based on test scores alone.

"I don't think tests are the real villains in this process," said Richard G. Cashwell, admissions director at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "We have to look at ourselves as being the villains. We don't use the tests properly."

Participants at the colloquium agreed that many colleges were failing to explain adequately to high-school students and their parents how factors other than test scores influenced admissions decisions. That failure, they said, coupled with a growing tendency among public officials and educators to use test results to judge the quality of schools and colleges, was contributing to an exaggerated view of the S.A.T.'s role.

Some participants noted that reports of average S.A.T. scores of students enrolled at particular colleges can lead students to decide, often in error, not to apply.

Then there are the concerns about the test's effect on students from minority groups—notably blacks and Hispanics, whose scores have been averaging about 100 points below those of whites on the S.A.T. scale of 200 to 800. Although many admissions officers and testing experts dispute the charges of test bias, that is far from a universal view.

"Bias is only one of many possible explanations" for the score differences among groups, wrote Robert L. Linn, professor of educational psychology and of psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in one of 20 background papers for the meeting. "It is at least as plausible that the scores reflect differences in educational experiences in and out of school," he said.

'Larger Implications' of Bias

William E. Sedlacek, director of testing, research, and data processing at the University of Maryland at College Park, argued that "much of the work we do in measurement has become so esoteric and so molecular that we tend to forget, or perhaps never think of, the larger implications of the bias issue."

"If the results from a given test produce negative outcomes for a person because that person is identified with a certain group, we have test bias," he said. But he said it was more important to look at general aspects of discrimination in society.

Many researchers who have good technical skills have not acquired "even a rudimentary appreciation of cultural variables, let alone how to measure them," Mr. Sedlacek said. That has resulted in a dearth of high-quality studies on minorities in higher education, he said.

He maintained that the practice of basing the S.A.T.'s validity on freshman grades discriminated against minority students because their performance often does not "stabilize" by the first year of college.

Noting that minority students drop out of college at a higher rate than whites, Mr. Sedlacek and other participants here cautioned that such students could be hurt not only by tests that underestimated their academic potential, but also by "overprediction" of their academic success on the basis of test scores.

Mr. Sedlacek suggested that how colleges "come across" to minority-group applicants was critical to their self-image and could hurt their academic performance. They are likely to be alienated, he said, if the message is, "We'll let you in, but you're not as good" as other students.

Effect of 'Performance Gap'

A related issue is whether blacks and other minority-group students with relatively low test scores benefit when selective institutions use special criteria to admit them.

Glenn C. Loury, professor of political economy at Harvard University, challenged those policies in a speech to the colloquium's opening session.

"There can be little doubt that today being a member of a disadvantaged minority group improves, rather than retards, the chances of being admitted at the most competitive institutions," he said. But "all is not well in post-civil-rights academe," he said, and the lower grades and higher attrition rates of blacks and Hispanics raise "questions of exquisite sensitivity."

"Put directly," said Mr. Loury, who is black, "the legitimacy of the now two-decades-old effort to diversify the student population at America's leading institutions is undermined by this performance gap."

T. CHARLES ERICKSON, YALE U.

Robert J. Sternberg: "Since we never take the kids with the lower scores, we never know how well they're going to do."

Saying he was "unconvinced" that the gap was rooted in institutional racism in academe, Mr. Loury argued that the key problem was "the significant difference in the quality of primary and secondary academic preparation between groups, and not the testing-instrument messenger that informs us of that reality."

"We are moving," he declared, "from an era when denial of opportunities to minorities was the central and straightforward problem to one in which the difficulty is that of assuring that minorities will be able to take advantage of the substantially equal opportunities that are coming to exist."

But Ronald T. Vera, associate scholar at the Tomás Rivera Center at the Claremont Graduate School, said he was most interested in how minority enrollments in higher education could be increased.

Acknowledging that admissions officers faced difficult choices, he said the need was for "measures that accurately reflect an individual student's performance and give him the opportunity to succeed, rather than excluding him from a particular college."

New Measures of Intelligence

The colloquium's participants, about 100 people invited by the College Board, included representatives of about 40 colleges and universities—most of them selective private institutions—and 10 school districts or schools, among other educators. They showed keen interest in discussions of "new developments" in evaluating intelligence.

One speaker was Robert J. Sternberg, professor of psychology and education at Yale University, who is creating unusual tests based on his theory that intelligence involves a lot more than the analytical abilities that traditional tests seek to measure.

He described his tests, which are expected to be published in 1989 by the Psychological Corporation, as focusing more on such qualities as creativity and the ability to come up with or synthesize ideas, and on how people acquire knowledge and learn to solve problems.

"We can do better" than rely on traditional intelligence tests, Mr. Sternberg said. He called the S.A.T. "a good predictor of a fairly narrow range of intellectual skills," but one that may fail to identify people who have other mental capacities important to success.

Tests need "more emphasis on learning how to think" than on content, he said in an interview, because some students who get low S.A.T. scores might be worthy of admission to a college on other grounds.

"Their academic smarts may not be that high," he said, "but they know what they're good at and how to make the most of it." Such people may have certain interpersonal skills or "social smarts" that the S.A.T. does not measure, he added.

Besides, "since we never take the kids with the lower scores, we never know how well they're going to do," Mr. Sternberg said.

As an example of what he would add to standardized intelligence tests, Mr. Sternberg pointed to measures of the processes that people use to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own efforts to solve problems.

Some people may do well on tests like the S.A.T. because the problems are posed for them. But the same people may not be all that capable of knowing when to spend time on a given problem, or even whether a problem exists, Mr. Sternberg said.

Howard E. Gardner, senior research associate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, said standardized testing "may have been a great mistake as far as exploiting the intellectual resources of our society is concerned."

Mr. Gardner, who advocates reliance on student "portfolios" in college admissions, said that if the current tests did not exist and could not be devised, "we would find ourselves returning to more naturalistic, on-site means of assessment"—apprenticeships, performance measures, and simulations.

"We psychologists should spend less time ranking people and more time trying to help them," he said.

With portfolios, he said, college applicants could provide information about long-term projects in which they had been involved. They could show what they had produced, explain why they liked certain works by others, and make observations about their own "patterns of growth, aspirations, areas of difficulty, and the like."

Such material, combined with high-school ranks, would be as good as the S.A.T. in predicting early success in college and "much better" than the test in predicting success in life generally, Mr. Gardner asserted.

He has devised a "theory of multiple intelligences" in which people's abilities are put in various non-traditional categories, such as musical skills, "bodily-kinesthetic" qualities like those commonly observed in athletes or surgeons, and interpersonal or intrapersonal skills—including a person's "access" to his own range of emotions as "as a means of understanding and guiding" his behavior.

Describing himself as an occasional critic of the Educational Testing Service, which develops and administers the S.A.T. for the College Board, Mr. Gardner said that "whatever utility the S.A.T. and standardized testing may have in certain areas of the curriculum, it's not particularly appropriate or adequate in the arts and humanities."

Mr. Hanford, who is planning to retire as president of the College Board within the next year, said after the colloquium that the organization was interested in new assessments that went beyond the S.A.T., but he stressed that they would "have to be in addition" to the test's measures of verbal and mathematical abilities.

He said the test itself was unlikely to be abandoned because "the ability to deal with words and numbers is basic to success in academic programs."

Assessment of Learning Backed, but Misuse Feared, Survey Finds

While most chief academic officers favor new methods of assessing student learning, they fear that assessment reports will be misused by outside agencies, according to preliminary results of a survey released this week by the American Council on Education.

Although assessment has been promoted by state leaders and national commissions as a way to improve higher education, the A.C.E. survey provides the first detailed campus perspective on the topic.

Those surveyed indicated that developing assessment methods that go beyond the basics of compiling rates of retention, graduation, and job-placement and information on courses completed would be costly and would require experimentation.

Nearly two-thirds said they had no clear sense of what to evaluate, although they favored measuring broadly defined abilities, such as critical thinking and quantitative problem solving.

Other survey findings will be published next month by the council.

What chief academic officers think about student assessment

Attitudes	Agree	Disagree
College leaders favor assessment	75%	5%
Most faculty members support assessment	58%	12%
Developing assessment measures will require much experimentation	54%	27%
Using nationally standardized tests for assessment may distort the educational process	38%	35%
Assessment should focus on broadly defined outcomes and competencies	67%	14%
Assessment should be closely tied to instructional improvement	91%	1%
Assessment should include substantial feedback to students	85%	4%
Assessment should be linked to analyses of institutional effectiveness	88%	2%
Assessment should be linked to planning and budgeting	79%	5%
All colleges should publish evidence of their effectiveness	42%	20%
For accreditation, colleges should show evidence of institutional effectiveness	64%	14%
States should require colleges to show evidence of institutional effectiveness	45%	26%
Most campus officials have strong fears about the misuse of assessment by external agencies	66%	16%

Potential obstacles	Major	Minor
No good evaluation instruments exist	19%	38%
Not suited to our curriculum	7%	23%
Most faculty members do not support it	15%	43%
No clear sense of what to evaluate	30%	34%
No funds to develop it	39%	32%
Students would be unhappy	10%	41%
Fears about misuse	13%	47%
Key administrators lack interest	9%	23%
No expertise to develop assessment procedures	12%	32%

Note: Results are based on a survey of 456 chief academic officers conducted in March. The response rate to the survey was 80 per cent. The figures do not total 100 per cent because "uncertain" and "not an obstacle" responses were omitted.

SOURCE: AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION